

Hobbies

U.S. House kills coin redesign, for now

By Roger Boye

After much political wrangling, the U.S. House has rejected two separate proposals calling for new designs on circulating coinage.

The action probably means that coin redesign is a dead issue until 1993 or beyond.

Lawmakers voted 206-199 on April 1 to kill a compromise plan that would have placed fresh designs on the "tails side" of quarters and half dollars. In February, the House voted 241-172 to defeat legislation calling for new designs on one side of all five types of circulating coins.

The U.S. Senate has approved coin-redesign bills several times in the past five years, but the measures haven't cleared the U.S. House. Some coinage experts blame the recent failures on "misinformation," which included suggestions that redesign would eliminate the words "In

God We Trust" from coins and would cost taxpayers millions of dollars.

Hobby newspaper Numismatic News—which has championed new coin designs since 1987—dubbed rumors concerning the motto "a bald-faced lie" and added that any lawmaker "who had actually read the bill before voting on it would have realized that."

Also, the U.S. Mint and other government agencies have predicted that new designs on circulating coins would make money for Uncle Sam, although the precise amount has been the subject of debate.

Proponents of redesign argue that existing motifs have become

stale, with the Washington quarter in use since 1932 and the Jefferson nickel since 1938. But others say that most Americans like their coins and that Congress looks silly debating the subject in an era of huge budget deficits.

Meanwhile, the U.S. House has approved legislation authorizing four new commemorative coin programs—two this year, and one each in 1993 and 1994—as well as the production of silver medals for veterans of the Persian Gulf war. The commemorative coins would honor Christopher Columbus and the discovery of America, the bicentennial of the White House, the bicentennial of the Bill of Rights, and the World Cup soccer games.